

ROUTLEDGE'S SIXPENNY HAND-BOOKS

GYMNASTICS



GEORGE RO

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A HANDBOOK
OF
GYMNASTICS

BY
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PREFACE.

THIS little book contains an abstract of the exercises which I have had the pleasure of teaching to my pupils, and practising myself.

Every exercise has been performed by myself, and therefore can be relied on as practicable.

The reader will not, of course, imagine that I have exhausted the subject, for that would be a work of years and many volumes. But I have given the most important of the various feats, which, if properly used, will serve as keys to almost every gymnastic exercise known.

For the body and limbs will be so strengthened, when they can achieve the feats here mentioned, that they will find but little difficulty in mastering any gymnastic problem that may be set before them.

1854

The first part of the book is devoted to the
history of the country from the first
settlement to the present time. The second
part is devoted to the description of the
country and its resources. The third part
is devoted to the history of the people
and their customs. The fourth part is
devoted to the history of the government
and its institutions. The fifth part is
devoted to the history of the church
and its members. The sixth part is
devoted to the history of the army
and its officers. The seventh part is
devoted to the history of the navy
and its sailors. The eighth part is
devoted to the history of the commerce
and its merchants. The ninth part is
devoted to the history of the industry
and its workers. The tenth part is
devoted to the history of the science
and its scholars. The eleventh part is
devoted to the history of the art
and its artists. The twelfth part is
devoted to the history of the literature
and its writers. The thirteenth part is
devoted to the history of the music
and its musicians. The fourteenth part
is devoted to the history of the dance
and its dancers. The fifteenth part is
devoted to the history of the games
and its players. The sixteenth part is
devoted to the history of the sports
and its athletes. The seventeenth part
is devoted to the history of the games
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and its athletes. The nineteenth part
is devoted to the history of the games
and its players. The twentieth part
is devoted to the history of the sports
and its athletes.

GYMNASTICS.

INTRODUCTION.

SOME generations since, the state of society was so essentially combative, that men valued mere brute force far beyond the more ethereal qualities of the mind, and cultivated it accordingly.

To train the body was the grand end of education; and the best-educated man was he who could strike the heaviest blows, and endure the greatest labour.

Sometimes a knight and a gentleman possessed the accomplishment of reading, and thereby obtained the character of a great scholar; while, if he could also write sufficiently to sign his name, was in some danger of suspicion as a wizard.

As civilisation proceeded in its onward march, men began to feel that learning and science did not really degrade human nature, and perceived that a knight might chance to be a better gentleman if his mind were cultivated as well as his body.

There seems also to have been a little jealousy at work : for as learning was, as a matter of course, confined to the cloisters, it naturally followed that their inmates exercised a sort of increasing influence over the strong-handed but pudding-brained race that surrounded them.

So, by degrees, it happened that the brains of Englishmen, after being for many generations systematically cramped, began to expand and develop themselves.

Then followed a reaction, which has continued nearly to the present day.

Now-a-days the brain is stimulated from early years, forced like a cucumber under a glass shade ; the intellect is cultivated at the expense of the body, which is left to grow as it best can.

In this book I say nothing of the education of the affections, for this subject belongs to another place.

But people are beginning to awake to the idea that the body is a very important portion of the humanity, and to feel that the health of the body is most influential upon the mind.

When the body is indisposed, the brain is indisposed also, and the mind cannot act properly upon its disordered medium. The intellectual powers lose their grasp, the fancy ceases to glitter under the pressure of illness, and a temporary attack of indigestion, which is mostly

caused by inert habits, might lose an empire. According to history, it did once lose a battle.

Happily there seems now to be a general feeling that body and mind ought to be developed to the utmost, for they are both gifts to us, and for the proper use of both we are responsible.

I have for years been much impressed with the exceeding value of gymnastic exercises in educating the young, and have always introduced them as a regular part of education

Even irrespective of the increased health that these studies impart, and the spring which they give to the mind, they possess one great advantage, namely, that they endow the gymnast with great presence of mind in difficulties.

By practice a gymnast's fingers and toes cling like burrs, where ordinary people could find no hold at all; and he feels himself perfectly safe, where others would assuredly perish.

It is curious that we English, who possess perhaps the finest and strongest figures of all European nations, should leave ourselves so undeveloped bodily. There is not one man in a hundred who can even raise his toes to a level with his hands when suspended by the latter members; and yet to do so is at the very beginning of gymnastic exercises.

We, as a rule, are strong in the arms and legs, but weak across the loins and back, and are

apparently devoid of that beautiful series of muscles that run round the entire waist, and show to such advantage in the ancient statues. Indeed, at a bathing-place, I can pick out every gymnast, merely by the development of these muscles.

It must be remembered, too, that a man need not possess very large muscles to be a very strong man.

At first the effect of these exercises is to enlarge all the muscles; but after a while they become smaller in volume, but wiry and sinewy in texture, with no superabundant fat among their fibres.

EXERCISES WITHOUT APPARATUS.

COMMENCEMENT.

At the beginning of gymnastics, there is no need for any apparatus whatever; and the beginner will find that several of the feats which I am about to mention, will tax his powers to no small degree, before he takes to ropes, horses, and poles.

If he should feel himself fatigued while learning any feat, he should rest awhile, and when refreshed, either try again, or pass to another movement.

DRESS.

The best costume for a gymnast (if he uses any costume at all) is a light and loose flannel suit, with a belt round the waist, that can be buckled to suit the convenience of the wearer.

Some gymnasts like their belts to be very wide, and tolerably stiff.

The shoes should be quite light, made of soft leather, and without heels.

Always keep a coat or wrapper at hand, and put it on while resting, for there is nothing that is more likely to give cold as to sit in the open air, or in a draught, while heated and fatigued.

The gymnast will find himself much benefited by a sponging with tepid water immediately after he has finished his exercises. If practicable, a shower-bath is even better.

ECONOMY OF POWER.

The study of gymnastics does not only increase the bodily strength, but teaches the learner how to economize that power which he possesses.

When an unskilful person is trying to perform any feat,—such, for example, as raising himself by his hands,—he makes a series of violent struggles, and flounders about with his legs.

Now every movement, except that which is requisite for the performance, is just a waste of so much strength, and only serves to exhaust, instead of assisting.

A good gymnast performs all his feats quietly and easily; and, indeed, it is almost a general rule, that when some feat appears to be especially easy, it is in reality exceedingly difficult.

We now proceed to the first exercise.

EXTENSION.—No. 1.

Place the feet close together, and stand perfectly upright.

Now stretch the hands out straight in front, at the level of the shoulders, and place the palms together.

Separate the hands, and still keeping them at the same level, and the arms straight, try to make the backs of the hands meet behind you.

Continue to practise this movement until the hands meet easily behind. It is very difficult at first, but soon becomes easy, and is a splendid mode of opening the chest.

Take care to keep the feet together, and the body upright.

No. 2.

Stand as before, with hands in front, palms upwards.

Close the hands, and bring the elbows sharply backwards, until the hands are level with the sides.

Send them forward again, as if you wanted to annihilate an enemy in front, and repeat until tired.

No. 3.

Stand as before, but bring both fists to the shoulders.

Send them upwards, as if the enemy were in the clouds. Bring them down as if there were another on the ground, who must be crushed with the elbows.

No. 4.

Stand firmly and uprightly, throwing the weight of the body rather on the front of the feet.

Stretch out both hands, with fists tightly shut.

Now bring them slowly over the head, and make them revolve in circles, first forward, and then backward.

These exercises should be done very slowly, and especial care be taken that the body is kept upright.

These extension movements are intended to give ease and pliancy to the arms and their joints.

The beginner must expect to find himself rather stiff after he has been performing them, especially after No. 1; but the feeling will very soon wear off, and does not again make its appearance.

TOE PRACTICE.

Place the hands on the hips, and stand quite upright.

Rise slowly on the toes as high as possible, and remain so as long as possible.

Do this many times, for it strengthens the calves of the legs mightily.

Remember to keep the knees quite straight.

After practising this movement for some time, vary it by jumping on the toes, keeping the knees stiff, body upright, and the heels well off the ground.

KNEE PRACTICE.—No. 1.

Stand as before, and kick your thighs with your heels, using each leg alternately, and as rapidly as possible.

No. 2.

Keep the body very upright, and strike the chest with each knee alternately.

Be very careful not to stoop forward so as to meet the knee with the chest.

This exercise is intended to loosen the knee-joints in another manner.

No. 3.

Stand as in No. 1, and kick both thighs with both heels simultaneously.

A slight spring from the toes is required to achieve this feat properly.

If rightly performed, the feet should come to the ground on precisely the same spot. It looks very clumsy if the performer loses his balance, and keeps altering his place. It shows that his body is not perfectly upright.

No. 4.

Place both feet together, the toes on a line, and the hands on the hips.

Now kneel slowly until both knees rest on the ground.

Rise again, without removing the hands from the hips or the toes from the line.

Do it twenty times at least, without stopping.

No. 5.

Now for the first hard one.

Stand as before, with the toe of *one* foot on the line (say the right foot) and the other foot off the ground.

Keep the left foot from touching the ground, and kneel upon the *right knee*.

Rise again without moving the toe from the line.

This is rather difficult, and requires a nice balance of the body. Be careful to kneel very slowly, or otherwise the knee will come down with such a thump that it may suffer no small inconvenience.

Practise this with each foot alternately.

No. 6.

Plenty of knee-practice. Here is another stiff one.

Stand on the right foot, bend the left knee, and hold the left foot in the left hand.

Now touch the ground with the left knee, and rise up again, without loosing hold of the foot or suffering it to touch the ground.

As in the former cases, the right toe should remain on a line, and never move from it.

At first it will appear as if some resistless power were dragging the foot out of the hand, but after a while it becomes easy.

Practise with both feet.

No. 7.

As the preceding, only do not hold the foot, or suffer it to touch the ground. Take care not to lose the toe-line.

No. 8.

Hardest of all, and very comical.

Hands on hips, toes together on the line, body quite upright.

Rise on the toes, and then sink gradually down. the knees projecting in front, until you sit on your heels, the whole weight of the body being supported on the toes only.

Down you go, so pick yourself up, and persevere until you succeed. It is not so much the strength as the knack that is needed here.

SITTING PRACTICE.—No. 1.

Stand upright, cross the feet, and sink gradually until you rest on the ground after the tailor fashion.

Rise again, without moving the hands from the hips or the feet from their places.

No. 2.

This exercise is a capital test of the ability of the tailor who makes the gymnastic suit of clothes; for if there should be a defect in the nether garments, they will fly asunder with a report like a popgun.

When the gymnast can manage this feat, he may congratulate himself on having made a considerable advance.

Stand upright, extend both hands in front as a counterpoise, which is much needed, and hold out the left leg in front, at right angles with the body, and knee quite straight.

Now, still keeping the left leg in its position, bend the right knee very slowly, and *sit on the ground*.

Being seated, rise again, preserving the same attitude.

Don't be in too great a hurry to take your seat or you will come down with a run.

This is an invaluable exercise, as it gives a power of raising the body when in a position from which none but expert gymnasts could even stir. It is very difficult at first, for we feel a great repugnance to let the body sink sufficiently low, and most who try it declare it to be impossible.

However, after a few trials, they get over its difficulties, and manage it easily.

CUTTING CAPERS.

Stand with the toes together, and hands on hips.

Spring upwards, and, as you rise in the air, cross your feet and return them to the same position.

The toes must be kept pointed, as they will strike against each other as they attempt to cross.

Do not heed the curious sensation as if the feet were held by bonds, but persevere.

FOOT TO HAND.

Keep the body upright, hold out the right hand in a line with the shoulders, and kick it with the right foot.

Practise both feet alternately, knees quite straight

THE COMPASSES.

Easy enough, but useful. Spring into the air, and spread the feet as widely apart as possible, bringing them together again before touching the ground.

THE HANDSPRING.

Stand on the toes, lower yourself as in knee practice No. 8.

Throw yourself forward at full length, body stiff, and support yourself on the hands and tips of the toes. Take care of the nose.

Then spring from the ground with the hands, and clap them together before they touch the ground again.

To rise neatly from this position bring your feet between the hands with a sudden spring. It looks neat if you clap the hands as you bring up the feet.

TOUCHING TOES.

Hold the hands above the head, the palms in front and the thumbs just touching each other.

Now, keeping the knees stiff and straight, bend over until the fingers rest on the toes. Continue to practise this until you can pick up a sixpence at each heel while the knees are kept straight.

OVER THE STICK.

Take a stick of any kind, a poker, or a walking stick will do, and hold it with the hands three feet apart.

Stoop down, and place your knuckles on the ground in front of your toes, still retaining hold of the stick.

Then step over the stick without losing your grasp or moving the knuckles from the ground. It is capital practice.

JUMPING THROUGH THE HANDS.

Hold both hands in front of the body, place the tips of the middle fingers together, and jump through them without separating the fingers.

Take care not to knock the chin with the knees, for both those portions of anatomy have to approach each other very closely before the feet can pass through the arms.

Don't attempt to perform this feat if your shoes have heels to them, or your thumbs will suffer.

EXERCISES ON THE PARALLEL BARS.

THE BARS AND THEIR CONSTRUCTION.

THE Parallel Bars are very simple in their structure.

They are two wooden bars, about six or eight feet in length, four inches deep, and three wide, with their upper edges rounded off to prevent damage to the hands.

They are placed about eighteen or twenty inches apart, and four feet high, and fixed according to pleasure.

If they are intended to be permanent, they can be supported on four posts firmly driven into the ground.

But if they are to be used under cover, they ought to be supported on a wooden frame work. And it would be much more convenient for the frame to be nicely morticed together and held by screws, so that, in case of removal, it can be taken to pieces, and packed in a small compass.

This mode of manufacture is just as easy as any other, and infinitely more convenient.

If I were to give an account of *every* manœuvre that can be executed in the Parallel Bars, I should

require a large volume especially devoted to that subject.

I shall, therefore, content myself with noticing the more important feats that are generally executed, and leave the reader to invent as many more as he chooses.

TO GET ON THE BARS.

Stand between the bars, with hands closely pressed against the sides. Spring up, and placing a hand on each bar, remain suspended between them. This is called the first position.



When fairly established, accustom yourself as much as possible to the bars, and practise the wrists in their work.

SWINGING.

The next feat is called the swing.

While suspended between the bars, with the knees straight and the feet touching each other

begin to swing the body backwards and forwards.

By degrees increase the swing, until the body,



when swinging backwards, is nearly upright in the air ; and when going forwards, the feet come nearly over the head.

The accompanying figure shows a learner who can nearly accomplish this feat.

THE WALK.

First position.

Now walk along the bars, using the hands as feet, and *when* you have reached the end, walk back again.

It is not so easy as it seems, and the back walk tires the arms entirely.

Keep the arms straight, and don't shrug your shoulders over your ears, or make irregular and hasty steps.

THE LETTER L.

First position.

Raise the legs to a level with the bars, making them form a right angle with the body, and keeping the knees quite straight.

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in this attitude the gymnast turns his person into a representation of the letter L.

After doing this figure in the first position, stand between the bars, pass the hands under them, and so grasp them from the outside. Then make the L again, as shown in the cut



This is a very useful figure to learn, and strengthens the loins greatly.

SITTING ON THE BAR.

When in the first position, swing the legs forwards, and you will be able to seat yourself on either bar, as shown in the engraving.



A more powerful impetus will enable the gymnast to throw himself entirely over the bar and to come on the ground.

The swing in either direction will be found sufficient to throw the gymnast over the bars without any apparent exertion, only he must be careful to keep his knees straight, and to clear the toes.

THE JANUS.

Sit on the bars, as on a saddle, one leg over each bar, and the hands resting on the bars behind the legs.

Now, disengage the feet, swing boldly through the bars, and seat yourself astride, with your face in just the opposite direction.

Be sure to swing high enough, or the shins will be sadly knocked against the bars.

RISING AND SINKING.

First position.

Sink gradually between the bars, until you assume the attitude shown in the cut.



Remain in that attitude for a short time, and then rise again.

There are few exercises that open the chest more decidedly than this.

There is rather a neat modification of this manœuvre, called

KISSING THE BARS.

Sink between the bars, as in the preceding paragraph.

Then kiss each bar successively *behind* the hands, and rise.

It tries the wrists somewhat, as well as the chest.

BAR-JUMPING.

First position.

Now proceed along the bars by a series of jumps with the hands.

Practise this at first with bent knees to make the work easier, but do not rest content until you can jump along backwards and forwards with straight knees.



THE ARM SWING.

First position.

Suddenly bend the elbows, and rest with the

fore-arms on the bars. Swing while in this position, and look out for elbows.

When you have swung sufficiently, hang suspended between the bars, and then raise yourself on the hands again.

Practise the drop upon the fore-arms and the rise as often as possible.

STANDING ON THE BARS.

Now one of our former exercises (Sitting Practice No. 2) comes into play.

Sit astride either bar, and secure a good balance of the body.

Then place the sole of one foot on the bar, and hitch the other toe under it.



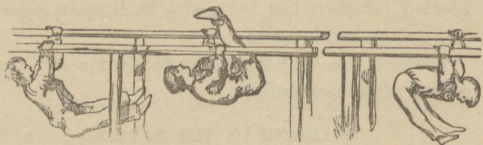
Now, by means of the toe, draw yourself to an upright position, and bring both feet together.

This is a very neat little exercise, and often entirely baffles those whose previous training has not fitted them for it.

THE BARBER'S CURL.

Go to either end of the bars, and do the letter L.

Count ten, and turn slowly over, as the central figure in the engraving, until you assume the attitude represented by the right-hand figure.



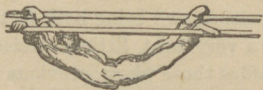
Count ten, and re-curl yourself to the L, when you may again count ten, and then rest yourself.

Be careful to keep both knees quite straight, and the feet well off the ground.

THE SAUSAGE.

Begin by kneeling on the bars, and placing both hands on them.

Slide the hands forward and the legs backward, hitching the toes over the bars, until the body hangs between them.

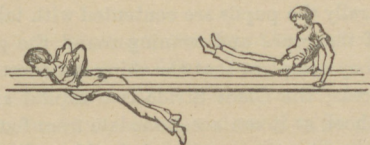


Count ten and draw yourself up again.

Don't be afraid. You will not snap across the middle, although you may feel as if you were about to do so every moment.

THE SPRING.

Swing at one end of the bars, and, when in full course, launch yourself forward, alighting on your hands in the grasshopper fashion shown in the engraving.



Very great care must be taken of the accuracy of the balance, or down you go between the bars and come flat on your back on the ground.

TOUCHING THE BARS.

First position.

Now, suddenly take the right hand from its bar, and touch the left bar in front of the body, instantly returning the hand to its own bar. Look out, or you will drop through the bars.

Do the same with the left hand.

When you can do this easily, practise it with this modification,—that you pass the hands *behind* the body in touching the bars.

THE GIANT STRIDE,

Or Flying Step.

Many schools possess this admirable piece of apparatus, but in very few is it used properly, or its powers rightly shown.

Generally the pupils are contented with taking hold of the ropes and running round the pole. Then they complain that the thing is useless.

Whereas, the Giant Stride is a capital affair for a school, as it can accommodate from four to six players at a time, and lends itself to all their peculiarities.

If they come out on a cold day, and want to be warmed, five minutes of Giant Stride will send a glow through their systems that will defy any British frost.

If they want to jump over heights, the Giant Stride will launch them over a ten-foot pole. If they wish to perform a series of graceful movements, the Giant Stride affords facilities little short of those given by the ice.

STRUCTURE OF THE GIANT STRIDE.

It is composed of an upright pole, tipped with a revolving cap, to which are fastened sundry ropes.

The central pole is best made of a tree trunk,

—if a rooted tree, and it can be left undisturbed, so much the better.

Otherwise, it must be of thoroughly well-seasoned wood, strong and genuine.

The lower end should be charred, in order to keep it from rotting, and the hole in which it is set should be quite six feet deep, and paved with stones.

From the ground to the top of the pole should be about fourteen to fifteen feet.

An iron cap is then placed on the top, traversing freely on a pivot, and carrying four rings, on which are fastened four ropes. To the end of each rope should be fastened cross bars of elm or ash about two feet in length.

The apparatus being thus completed, the gymnasts are to hold the cross bars at arms' length, and run round the pole, bearing their weight on the ropes, so that their hands, heads, and feet are in the same line with the rope. Their feet will then gradually leave the ground, and only touch at intervals.

After practising this from right to left, do the same from left to right, until it is as easy to run one way as the other.

Take care not to lose your balance, or you will turn round, and grind yourselves on the ground very unpleasantly.

This is but the beginning. The young gymnast

should then run round, keeping himself constantly rotating, which may be done by the touch of the toe against the ground.

Another accomplishment is to describe four circles in going round the pole, making the hands the centre of each circle, and the feet the circumference.

A pole should also be erected, about a yard outside the range of the feet, and to this should be fixed a number of pegs, which will support a string passing from the central pole. Over this the gymnasts should leap, performing the movement merely by the centrifugal force, and not by the spring of the feet.

About ten feet is considered a good height for a boy to attain, but a man can go higher.

CLIMBING THE BOARD.

LET a board be fixed at an angle against some object, such as a wall, and capable of alteration.

Let it first be fixed at an angle of 45° or so, or even at a less angle than this if necessary.

Then grasp the outside edges of the board with both hands, set the feet flat upon its centre, and try to mount by moving hands and feet alternately.

Make very little steps both in ascending and

descending, and, in the latter instance, be specially careful to avoid a sudden slide down the board.

As you improve, set the board more upright, until you can ascend it when it is quite perpendicular.

It is also possible to ascend a pole in the same manner.

Remember that the soles of the shoes must not be new and slippery, or neither pole nor board will be surmounted.

CLIMBING THE POLE.

THE ordinary mode of ascending a pole or a bare tree-trunk (in some places called "swarming"), is by grasping it with the arms and legs, and alternately raising them to higher positions.

Some gymnasts ascend the pole as stated in the preceding paragraph; and it certainly has the advantage in point of appearance.

In descending the pole, be careful not to slide down too fast, or there will be excoriations of skin and damage to clothing.

CLIMBING THE ROPE.

THIS most useful exercise should be constantly practised.

In every gymnasium there is at least one rope

suspended, which ought to hang freely, and to be without knots.

The easiest mode of ascending the rope is by grasping it as high as possible with the hands, and holding it also with the feet, one of which is under and the other pressing upon the rope.

Thus the weight of the body rests considerably on that portion of the rope that is held by the feet.

Then, as the hands are raised to take a higher hold, the feet sustain the body, and *vice versâ*.

But one who means to be a true gymnast despises the feet in rope-climbing, and pulls himself up solely by the alternate action of the hands.

Be very careful never to descend by letting the rope slide through your hands, as it will assuredly inflict a painful wound, and may cut them to the bone.

Always descend hand under hand.

Many exercises may be performed on the rope, which will suggest themselves to the gymnast.

For example, it affords a decided contrast to the ordinary mode, if you grasp the rope with the hands, and then, inverting your position, throw the feet over the head, and hold the rope between them, keeping the knees straight.

In this attitude ascend the rope, and descend again, taking care not to let the hands slip, or

the strength of your skull will be unpleasantly tested.

Again: Grasp the rope at a point about two feet from the ground, and retreat as far as you can, holding the rope in the hands.

Now, leap into the air, and swing as far as you can, launching yourself forward, and marking the spot where the toes touch the ground.

Be careful to curl the body well upwards as you swing forwards, or you will assuredly scrape the ground just under the point where the rope is suspended, and the consequences will be disastrous to clothes and cuticle.

THE HORIZONTAL BAR.

THIS is a very simple piece of apparatus, being merely a pole fixed horizontally at any height that may best suit the gymnast.

There are several modes of fixing it, the most usual being to fasten each end to an upright post, which is furnished with mortices, so as to permit the height of the bar to be altered at pleasure.

But there is one mode, which I especially affect, called the triangle, which can be used wherever there is a beam of sufficient height for its suspension.

It is made as follows:—

Get a bar of any strong wood,—deal will do. if it is uniform in grain and quite free from knots. Its diameter is about two inches and a half, and its length a little over three feet.

Also, get a piece of well-made, but not very thick rope, about eighteen feet long, and securely fasten the ends of the rope to the ends of the pole.

Fasten an iron “eye” into the centre of the rope, and you have the most important part of the triangle made. In fact, the rope and pole do form a triangle when suspended from the “eye.”

Have a strong iron pulley firmly fixed into the beam, pass a stout rope through it, fasten one end of the rope to the “eye” of the triangle, and haul away at the other until you have suspended the pole at the proper height.

Make fast the loose end, and then you have an apparatus that can be adapted to little boys of eight years old, or tall lads of eighteen years of age and six feet of stature.

The proper height for the horizontal bar is when the raised hands cannot quite reach it, and a small jump is requisite before the gymnast can suspend himself by his hands.

The triangle is useful, because it swings and twists about, and requires the gymnast to exert his power exactly in the proper direction; for if he does not so, away goes the bar out of his reach.

Besides, it is good to be accustomed to maintain a safe hold on so changeful a support, and not to heed any amount of swing or spin.

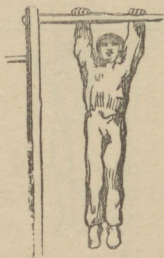
Having adjusted the triangle to the proper height, we begin by

HANGING ON THE POLE.

Jump up, and seize the pole with both hands, taking care to have the knuckles upwards, and *the thumbs on the same side of the pole as the fingers*

This is indispensable. Never grasp the horizontal bar as you would a broomstick, but merely *hitch* the fingers over the bar in a fish-hook style.

Watch a monkey gambolling about his bars, and see how he holds them. The sloth, too,



merely hooks his curved claws over the branches, and defies the gales to shake him off.

So, imitate the sloth as well as you can, and curve your hand into a hook-like form.

Let the body hang quite straight, but not stiffly so, the knees straight, and the toes rather pointed.

After a while, practise hanging by each hand alternately, letting the other arm hang easily by the side. Don't twist round, or you will lose your hold.

A few blisters may be expected at first, but they are caused almost entirely by unskilful management of the bar, and will soon get well again.

THE WALK.

Hang on the bar, and make alternate steps with the hands, so as to carry you from one end of the bar to the other.



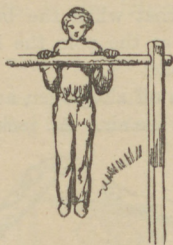
Do this first to one end of the bar, and then return by the same method. Be careful to make the movement equably, and don't kick the legs about.

When you can execute this movement properly, place one hand at each side of the bar, and do the same thing.

BREASTING THE BAR.

Hang on the bar, *knuckles uppermost*, and slowly draw yourself up until the chest rests against the bar.

Lower yourself as slowly, hang for a moment, and again draw yourself up.



This should be practised continually, as it is the foundation of most of the exercises, and strengthens the body and chest very considerably.

Let the legs hang quite still while doing it, and do not be content until you can draw yourself up twelve successive times without feeling fatigue.

SWINGING.

This exercise cannot be practised on the triangle.

Hang on the bar, and communicate a pendulum movement to the body, gradually increasing it until you feel yourself in danger of flying off.

This soon happens at first, but after practice the body can be swung through the greatest part of a circle.

When you are well accustomed to the swing, you will find that when the body has swung nearly as high as the pole, the hands bear but lightly on the bar.

So, take them off altogether, and launch yourself boldly into the air. An inch or two will be



sufficient at first, but many gymnasts can spring a foot or so from the pole.

It has a bold and dashing effect.

THE GREAT CIRCLE,

If the gymnast will only dare he will achieve.
But it is a trying affair for the nerves, both of

performer and spectators, and never fails of producing quite a sensation.

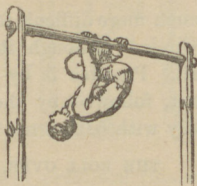
Swing as in the preceding exercise, and when at the full swing backwards, with the body at its highest elevation, put on all the steam, and *go completely round the bar.*

There must be no half measures about this exercise, for every particle of strength will be wanted to drive the body round so large a circle as that which is formed by the feet as a circumference, and the hands on the bar as a centre.

Of course this is also impracticable on the triangle.

KICKING THE BAR.

Hang by the hands, and then slowly gather up the body, drawing up the feet until they touch the bar.



Both feet should be kept together, and the movement performed with steadiness.

One point to be observed in this exercise is, to throw the weight of the body and head as much

behind the arms as possible, so as to make them counterbalance the weight of the legs and feet.

Do not attempt to jerk yourself up, or plunge about in the exertion, for you might strain yourself by so doing.

Lower yourself slowly, and if you fail at the first few trials, do not be discouraged. The strength and knack will soon come.

RISING ON THE BAR.

Draw yourself up to your breast, and then with a sudden impulse straighten the arms, so that you raise the body until the bar crosses it at the hips.

It is better to throw yourself an inch from the bar while you make the spring, as then the friction of the bar against the body is no hindrance.

This is a much more difficult feat than making the "Great Circle," although it appears to be nothing at all. Practise it by rising with the right arm first, followed by the left, then *vice versâ*, and lastly with both arms together.

THE ROLL OVER.

After raising yourself as in the preceding exercise, change the position of the hands, so as to bring the finger-points on the same side as the body, then lean forward, and roll fairly over the bar, dropping lightly to your feet.

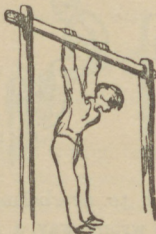
Take notice that in all cases the toes should be kept pointed ; and that when the gymnast comes to the ground, he should do so on the tips of his toes, and not on the heel or the sole of the foot.

PASSING THROUGH THE ARMS.

Hang on the bar, and curl yourself over as in Kicking the Bar.

But instead of letting the feet touch the bar pass them neatly under it, and continue to pass the feet on until they hang as in the engraving.

Then, after hanging as long as possible, drop to the ground.



After you have practised this well, instead of dropping to the ground, re-ascend, re-pass the feet, and then drop.

This is a magnificent exercise for the shoulder blades and the muscles of the back.

By practice you will be able to let the feet

hang nearly as low when the arms are thus twisted as when they are straight.

SITTING ON THE BAR.—No. 1.

Pass the feet under the bar.

Then, instead of rolling over, stretch the feet quite straight into the air, so that you are in a perpendicular position, the heels in the air and the head pointing towards the ground.

Rest a moment in this position, and then draw yourself upwards by the arms until the weight of the legs and feet brings you upon the bar seated.



Take care not to overbalance yourself and come round the wrong way, a mistake which a beginner generally commits.

No. 2.

Hang on the bar, and pass one foot, say the right, between the hands, and hitch it over the bar at the knee. Let the left foot hang as low as it can.

Give a good swing backwards, using the left leg as a weight to increase the power of the swing, and come upright upon the bar.

Now, bring the left leg over the bar, taking care not to overbalance yourself by so doing, and then you are seated.

LEAVING THE BAR.

There are two neat modes of getting off the bar when you are seated upon it.

In the first method, you put your hands on the bar, with the finger-points forward, slide easily backward, keeping your knees bent, roll over backwards, and come on the feet neatly.

The other plan resembles that adopted on the parallel bars.

Place both hands on the bar, either on the right or left side, the finger-points turned away from the person.

Then, with a slight spring, bring the feet over the bar, and vault to the ground. Take care not to hitch the toes against the bar.

BAR-JUMPING.

Hang on the bar, and, by means of the arms, jump along the pole from one end to the other.

This is a capital exercise, and should be performed with the knees quite straight.

It tries the arms considerably at first, and the hands too.

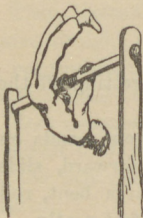
Practise it with the hands under the bar, and then with one hand at each side.

CIRCLING THE BAR.

Now for a stiff one.

Hang on the bar, and draw up the body and legs as if about to kick the bar.

But, instead of kicking, or passing under it, raise the feet above the bar, continuing to draw yourself upwards until you have come quite round the bar. Do it slowly.



LETTER L.

Hang on the bar, and then raise the legs until they form a right angle with the body. Count fifty before you drop the feet.

ROASTING-JACK.

Put one knee over the bar, letting the other hang down, and hold on with the hands.

Now, swing backwards, and give yourself such an impetus that you come right round the bar, and come up again as before.

You should be able to spin round the bar a dozen times without stopping.

When you have practised this exercise back-

ward, do the same thing forward, of course shifting the hands to the opposite side of the bar. In the forward roll it is better to sit nearly astride the bar.

THE TRUSSED FOWL.

This exercise is calculated to test the power of the grasp and the force of the joints, as it seems at first to have the effect of pulling every joint out of its place.

Hang on the bar, draw up the feet, and put the *insteps* against the bar.

Now push your body right through the arms, as if you were trying to turn yourself inside out, and after remaining in this attitude as long as you conveniently can, return in the same manner.

THE TRUE LOVER'S KNOT.

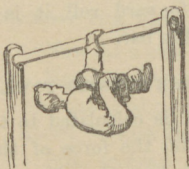
This is an exercise difficult to describe, and not very easy to do.

Proceed as follows :

Grasp the bar ; pass the left knee through the right arm, so as to let the knee rest in the elbow ; pass the right knee over the instep of the left foot ; let go with the left hand, and with it grasp the right foot.

You will now be suspended by the right hand, and will be packed up in a remarkably small space.

Take care of the right wrist, or you will spin round and twist off.



By means of this exercise the wrist is very much strengthened, and the power of the grasp increased.

THE L ROLL.

Hang on the bar, forming the letter L.

Now, bring the feet through the arms, as has been already mentioned, but keep the knees straight all the time.

THE GRASSHOPPER.

Sit on the bar, and hold firmly with one hand on each side, points of fingers to the front.

Let yourself gradually slide forwards, until the bar crosses the small of the back, and the elbows project upwards something like the legs of a grasshopper.

Then draw yourself up again, and assume your sitting position on the pole.

This is about the most difficult exercise that has been mentioned, and tries the shoulders



marvellously. But it should be learned, for it is very useful.

STANDING ON THE BAR.

Sit astride the bar, and place both hands on the bar, just in front.

With a sudden spring, bring both feet upon the bar, the feet crossing each other at the heels; at the same time raising the body to an upright position.

It is not strength that is required in this exercise so much as a good balance and presence of mind.

Another mode of standing on the bar is that which has already been mentioned in the Parallel Bars, viz. by placing one foot on the bar, hitching the other under it, and drawing up the body by the latter foot.

HANGING BY THE LEGS.

Sit on the bar ; then suddenly slide backwards and drop, catching yourself by your bent knees.

Be careful to drop quite perpendicularly, and not to communicate any swing to the body, or the legs may be unhitched and the gymnast come down on his nose.

When the young gymnast can hang by both legs easily, let him take one of them from the pole, and remain suspended by the other. He



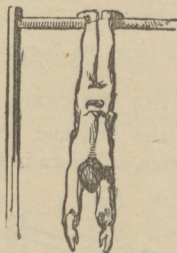
should not (as some teachers recommend) catch the instep of the suspending foot with the knee of the other. There is quite sufficient force in the one knee to hold him up, and if he keep it tightly bent, there will not be the least danger of its unhooking.

HANGING BY THE FEET.

We now proceed to a more ambitious performance, namely, that of suspending the body by the feet instead of the knees.

Hitch both insteps over the pole, forcing the toes upwards as much as possible.

Then loosen the hands from the pole, and let the body hang perpendicularly, without a jerk or a swing.



To raise the body again is not so easy, but it can be done with a little practice. But the neatest way to leave the pole when in this attitude is, by dropping to the ground on the hands, and so letting the feet come to the ground.

HANGING FROM THE TRIANGLE.

If you have nerve, here is something wherewith to astonish the natives.

Sit on the bar, folding your arms. Then throw yourself a regular somersault backwards, as if you meant to throw yourself out of the triangle.

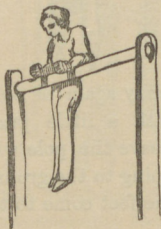
But, as you come over, spread the legs, so that

the feet catch against the ropes. Let them slide down the ropes, and you will be held by your insteps at the angle formed by the junction of the ropes and the bar.

I once saw a man perform this exercise in a triangle raised fifty feet in the air. It had a most startling effect, for, as he turned over, it seemed as if he must be inevitably dashed to pieces.

THE ARM CHAIR.

Spring upon the bar, and support yourself upon the fore-arms, as shown in the cut.



This is rather a trying exercise.

KISSING THE BAR.

Another difficult exercise. Raise yourself on the bar, as before mentioned, until the bar crosses the waist.

Sink gradually down, until you can touch the bar with your lips, and then raise yourself again.

THE WOODEN HORSE.

THE series of horse exercises is extremely interesting. The performers always like the horse exercises, and bystanders seem to appreciate them even more than those on the horizontal bar.

There is more scope for change of attitude than on the bar, and the legs are exercised as much as the arms ; in some of the feats much more so.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE HORSE.

The wooden horse is made of a great cylinder of wood, generally part of the trunk of a tree.

It is mounted on four posts for legs, which are either driven firmly into the ground or fastened to a strong framework, so that no amount of force will push it over.

A saddle should be placed on the back, rather nearer one end than the other, which saddle should be made of stout rough leather, and nailed firmly in its place.

Two pommels, made of wood, and covered, if desirable, with leather, should also be placed on the horse, and the hind pommel should be rather higher than the other.

A shallow pit, of a few inches in depth, and some four feet square, should be dug in the out-

side of the horse, and filled with sawdust, on which the gymnast may alight after some of his lofty leaps, or into which he may chance to tumble, should he miss his mark.

The paving on the near side should be of sand if practicable, or very fine gravel.

Many gymnasts like to have a spring board from which to leap, and I rather recommend it.

The board should be made of several narrow boards, placed side by side, and firmly nailed to stronger pieces that lie across them.

On the centre of the board should be fixed a piece of leather or carpet, in order to afford the feet a firm hold in jumping.

Each end of the board must be supported on wooden blocks, so as to give it space for springing. If the ground is hollowed under it, the same result will be attained.

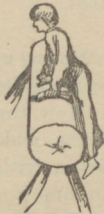
The height of the horse is regulated by that of the gymnast, the top of his nose affording an accurate criterion ; for the top of the saddle ought just to come up to that feature.

MOUNTING THE HORSE.

Stand on the near side of the horse, placing one hand on each pommel. Then spring up, and bring the arms straight, so that the body is supported by the hands, while the legs rest lightly against the horse.

After remaining for a few moments in this attitude, jump to the ground and up again immediately. Continue to practise this jumping, until it can be done easily, and remember always to come down on the toes.

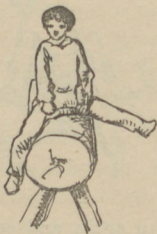
When you can jump up and down six or seven times successively, make a rather higher leap than usual, throw the right leg over the saddle, removing the right hand to let it pass, and then you are fairly mounted.



Practise mounting both ways; it's only a wooden horse, and does not feel insulted even if you do mount with your face to his tail.

DISMOUNTING.

To dismount properly and neatly, place the



left hand on the fore-pommel, and the right hand on the saddle.

Raise yourself a little on the hands, and throw yourself off, coming on the ground nicely on your toes.

SUSTAINING THE BODY.

Spring up as in the preliminary exercise, arms stiff and legs straight.

Now throw yourself a little away from the horse, and bring yourself back again by the arms, without suffering the feet to touch the ground.

This is an useful exercise to prepare oneself for a real horse that starts away as it is being mounted.

KNEE PRACTICE.

Place both hands on the pommels, then leap up, and kneel with the right knee on the saddle.



Leap down, up again, and come with the left knee on the saddle.

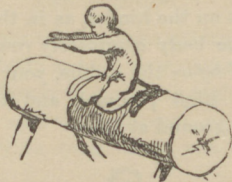
Afterwards kneel with both knees, taking care

not to go too high, as you may chance to topple over ignominiously.

THE KNEE LEAP.

But, as it is possible that you might so err, the following exercise will teach you how to escape the danger of a fall.

Leap up with the knees on the saddle. Lean well forward, and, with a bold spring, clear both legs of the saddle, and come to the ground.



There is not the least difficulty about this exercise, although, when it is first attempted, the legs feel as if they were secured to the horse. Only daring is required, and after doing it once, you will do it ever afterwards with perfect ease.

LEG THROUGH ARMS.

Hands on saddle as before. Now, leap up well, and pass the right leg clean over the saddle, between the arms.

Make a slight spring from the arms, withdraw the leg and arms to the ground. immediately

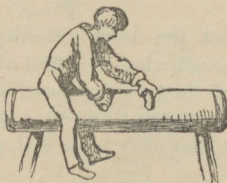
springing up again, and passing the left leg through the arms.

Let the unused leg hang down easily, and keep the body upright. A stooping attitude has a most awkward effect.

SWINGING PRACTICE.

Mount, but instead of seating yourself on the saddle, do so behind it.

Now place the left hand on the fore-pommel, and the right on the hinder, as in the engraving, and swing the body completely round, so as to seat yourself *before* the saddle, your face looking towards the hind pommel, and the feet not touching the ground at all.



Then change hands, and swing round again, so as to bring yourself into the position from which you started.

This is very useful exercise for developing the power of the arms.

KICKING THE SADDLE.

Hands on pommels. Jump up, and bring the toes to the top of the saddle, as in the illustration.

Afterwards go a little higher, place the soles of the feet on the saddle, let go the pommels and come up standing erect on the horse.



ARM PRACTICE.

Mount. Place the hands on the front pommei, and raise the body as high as you can. There is not the least danger of going too high.

When you can thus suspend yourself for a short time, try to do so while you swing your body gently.

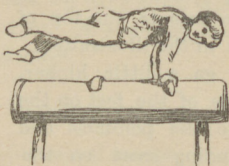
Lastly, raise yourself up as before, and slap the soles of your feet together over the top of the saddle.

CROSS PURPOSES.

Which cannot happen accidentally.

Mount, and placing both hands on the front pommel, swing yourself as high in the air as possible, crossing your legs at the same time, and twisting the body, so as to seat yourself again on the saddle, but looking in the opposite direction.

Having done so, swing up again and resume your former position.



A very decided swing is required here, or you will kick your shins with your own heels, which is one of the most irritating of occurrences.

THROUGH THE ARMS.

Hands on pommels. Take a good spring, and bring yourself completely over the saddle, passing through your arms as you do so.

When your feet are well clear of the horse, give an impulsion with the arms, and alight on the ground neatly.



This is a very effective exercise, and does not require so much strength as boldness. If you hesitate, down you go.

SIDE-SADDLE.—No. 1.

Stand with the right side to the saddle, hands on pommels. Spring up well, and throw the right leg into the saddle, lifting the left hand to let the leg pass, but retaining the hold of the other hand.

Dismount, and instantly leap up again; but mount with the left leg, removing the right hand.

Persevere in this, and then proceed to the next, which is more difficult, and requires a neater balance.

No. 2.

Hands on pommels. Leap up, and throw both feet completely over the body of the horse, and seat yourself behind the saddle, as is here shown.

Down, and, with a spring, seat yourself in the same way on the front of the saddle.



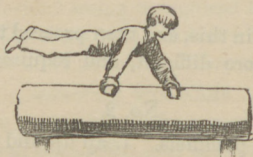
Take care not to put on too much steam, or you will slide over the horse and come down in

the sawdust ; while, if you do not put on enough, you will come slipping backwards, doubled up in an absurd fashion.

THE VAULT.

Hands on pommels, and throw both legs completely over the back of the horse, as in the cut.

Do it at first with the aid of a short run, but afterwards with a simple jump.



Practise the vault first with the feet to the right, and then to the left. Indeed, all these exercises should be so practised, or they will not develop both sides of the body equally.

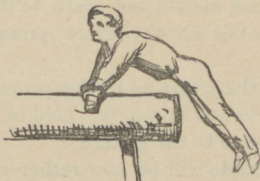
SIDE-SADDLE LEAP.

Spring up as in Side-Saddle No. 2, but let the legs pass completely over the horse, while the knees are kept straight, the body erect, and one hand on the back pommel.

THE BACK VAULT.

Sit behind the saddle, placing both hands on the hinder pommel.

Raise the body on the hands, and with a



powerful effort of the arms, throw yourself clear off the horse.

THE SINGLE HAND LEAP.

Try to leap into the saddle, while one hand only holds the pommels, and the other hangs quietly by the side. First right hand, and then left.

THE SOMERSAULT.

Take a short run, put both hands on the pommels, and fling yourself fairly over, not loosing your hold of the pommels, until the feet have well passed the centre of the horse.

Don't be afraid. If you only hold on well by the pommels, you *must* come down properly. There is no need for a very powerful swing, for the best gymnasts come over quite slowly.

THE DOUBLE SOMERSAULT.

This exercise I believe to be my own special invention, and I never saw any one who could do

it except the inventor. But there is no reason why every one should not learn to do it, for it merely depends on the exact preservation of balance.

Go over the horse, as in the preceding paragraph, but do not loosen the hold of the hands when you come to the ground.

Your attitude will be now rather curious, the back bent like a bow, the head falling backwards, and the hands over the head.



Now make as powerful a spring as the legs can achieve, and with the arms draw yourself over the horse again, thus performing exactly the reverse of the forward somersault.

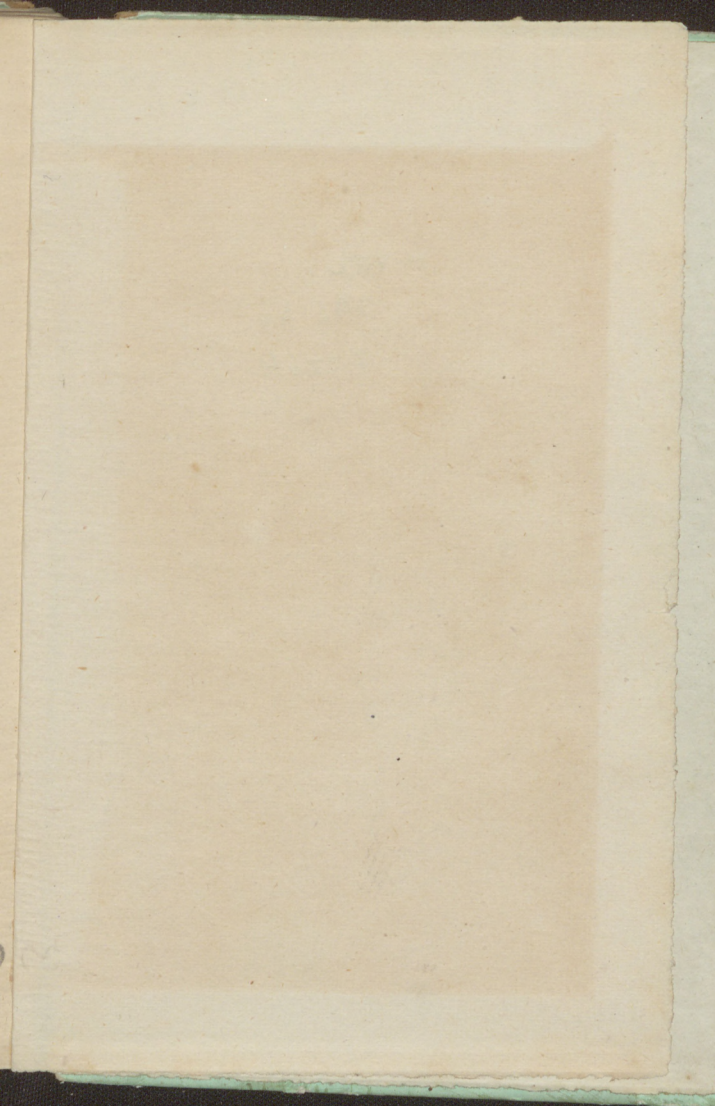
There is a slight error in the engraving, for the fingers ought to be turned *inside* the saddle, and not outside it,

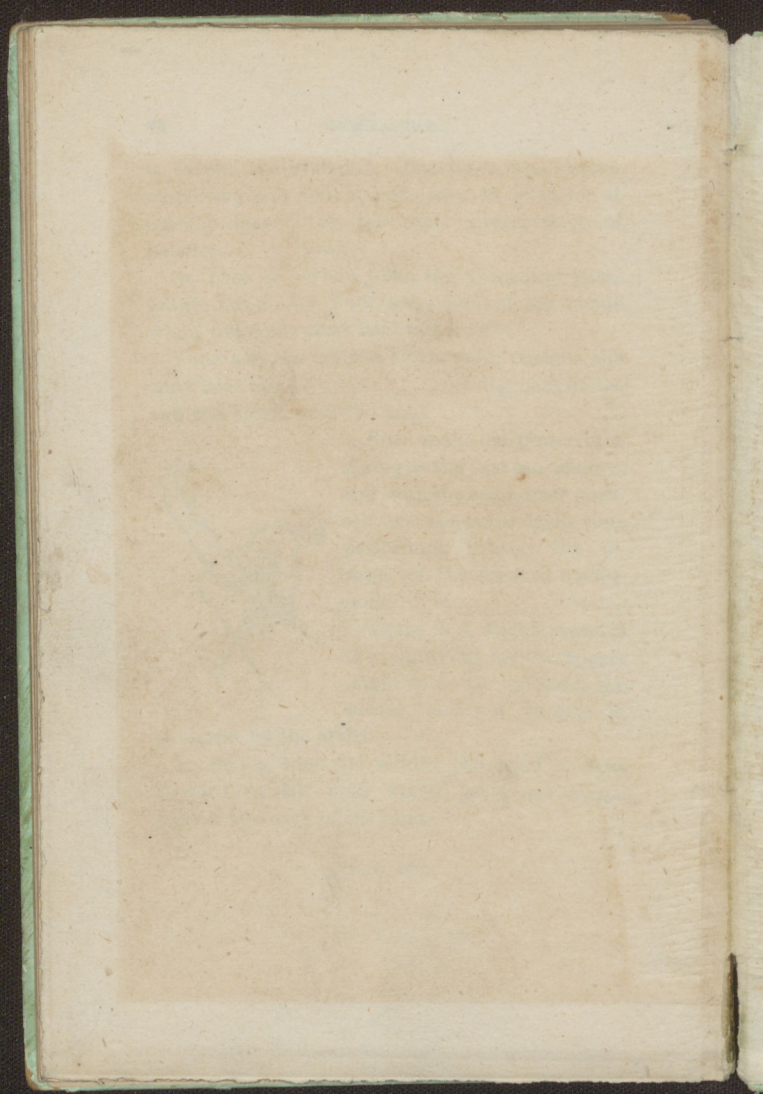
as shown by the artist.

In rolling over the saddle, the head is bent forward, or the nose would get a sad scrape against the back of the horse.

THE END.

27





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